

Nomination for the Frank Miracola Award – Essay

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Introduction

It would be an honor to be the recipient of the Frank Miracola Award. I met Frank Miracola in my first year as a media specialist. Having heard for a few years from my colleagues how dedicated Frank was to real learning, I was excited to learn from him at MISD trainings. Frank used hard work and humor to teach classes and was always going the extra mile in his teaching. When Frank started his “free” courses, he was committed to getting educators excited about technology, taking advantage of no cost options. If chosen, I will utilize the funds to implement the new tools that I learned about in the 21things4teachers course in greater depth in hopes that I get my students as excited about learning as Frank was about teaching.

Background

I took the 21things4teachers course at the Macomb ISD to learn how to become a more effective media specialist. I often hear that we need to “integrate technology” into our lessons, but with the vast amount of resources available and not enough time to narrow the field, I went to my colleagues at the MISD for help. Integrating technology can have so many meanings and can look like so many things. Technology tools change so quickly that I felt some great tools were passing me (and my students) by. If I continued to use the same tools and teach in the same way, my students were going to be left uninterested in what I was trying to teach them, no matter how exciting the content.

Classroom Use

After starting the 21things course I quickly realized that I was familiar with some of the 2.0 tools that were being introduced. However, they were tools that I hadn’t used in a while or hadn’t thought of ways that I could integrate them into my Media curriculum. One of the first tools we learned about was

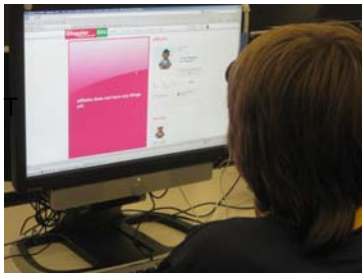
Zoomit. I was so excited about this free tool that the very next day I shared it with several teachers and my principal. After all, the students that I teach aren't always just the kids, but my colleagues as well. Teachers began using this tool in the classroom immediately. Next I learned about shortcuts on Microsoft Word that would make my work time more productive. Again, I immediately began sharing this information with colleagues in my school and others. We started a dialogue that we couldn't contain; our shared ideas were contagious and we began looking for ways to implement these free tools in our everyday instruction.

I learned about so many great free tools in this course. The most important thing I learned however is why it was important to integrate them into my instruction. Using technology just for the sake of using it is not good instruction for students. Understanding how the technology enhances student learning is what makes it a best practice and allowed me to really think about projects that would be most beneficial to student learning.

I had already been using many tools with my students. Then I learned about "flipping your classroom" and it brought a whole new meaning to teaching and learning. I am currently working with my 5th grade Media/Technology students on a "flipping the classroom" lesson. Prior to our holiday break students chose books that were both new to our school library and of interest to them personally. Their task was to read and promote these books to other students. Essentially, they would be doing a "book talk" to help gain interest in these new books. Students were expected to read their books and take notes on what they felt made the story interesting. Then the classroom will get flipped.



The students' homework is to go home and watch a short 15 minute screencast about Glogster (<http://tinyurl.com/colemanflippedclass>) . Students learn how to set up their profiles at home and use some of the features on Glogster. They are also reminded of how to create a thinking map using Kidspiration. Students then have to take a survey when they complete the assignment using the survey tool on Google Docs. This will allow me to know who is prepared when they came to school. The following week they should have a basic understanding of how to use Glogster and will begin planning what they want to put on their graphic blog! Since this is the first time I have tried this type of teaching, students were brought in for a 5 minute preview so they could check their nicknames and passwords.



Funding

If I am the recipient of the Frank Miracola award, I will utilize the funds to continue to flip the classroom with my students and colleagues. The first thing I would use this award money for is a premium account to Glogster **(\$99.00/yr)**. Remaining funds would be used to purchase and maintain a pro account to Weebly**(\$27.49/2 yr.)** . I am currently using this tool to better showcase student work and increase school and home communication. An addition to these would be to use the award to purchase and maintain an upgraded Screencast-o-matic account to use with students **(\$12.00/yr.)**. I used the free version to tape my “flipped classroom” lesson, but also plan to have the students create their own screencasts of different learning sites so students and teachers can learn the benefits of different online resources. Finally, my students create a digital portfolio using Photo Story including the work they complete throughout the year. I would like to be able to have students print and display their final portfolio projects in color and would use any remaining funds to purchase colored ink. The funds would

allow me to go to the next level in my own learning and, by design allow me to help others learning go to the next level.

Conclusion

The material that has been presented in the 21things4teachers course is inspiring. Whether or not I am the recipient of this award, I will continue to find ways to make sure that my students benefit from these tools. I have been re-inspired to continue the work that I was already doing, but in a different way. Students are excited when they come to class and they are having conversations about their projects and what they are learning outside of the classroom. Teaching and learning just can't get better than this. Teachers are beginning to get excited as well because they feel they have someone in the building who is willing to support them, which will in turn only be better for the students. I believe that these conversations that teachers and students are having, due to excitement, creativity and critical thinking is something that Frank Miracola would be proud of. It is truly an honor to be even considered for this award.